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FIREFIGHTERS IN TRAINING SAVE MAN FROM JUMPING OFF BRIDGE

by FDNY.NET on August 18, 2017 in Latest News



PAULINO PENA LEFT AND RICHARD VERGARA

Matthew McDevitt

BY LORENA MONGELLI

August 17, 2017 | 4:10pm | Updated

Two probationary FDNY firefighters who were on their way to the academy Thursday saved a man from jumping off the RFK Bridge.

Richard Vergara, 34, spotted the distraught shirtless man on the bridge ledge at 4:53 a.m., while driving across the span to the FDNY's Fire Academy on Randall's Island.

The 14-year Marine Corps veteran, who served tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, initially thought he was a worker. "As I got closer, and I saw him with no shirt on, I realized he's not a construction worker and that he's trying to jump off the bridge."

He got on the phone with 911 and his training as a marine and former Virginia cop kicked in.

"He had one leg over, he just had to get the other leg over. When I saw him, I ran over to him and ripped him off the wall," Vergara said. "I said, 'Hey, stop! What are you doing?' I knew he

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RAUNEDYS PENA (LEFT) AND RICHARD VERGARA

Matthew McDermott

BY LORENA MONGELLI

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He got on the phone with 911 and his training as a marine and former Virginia cop kicked in.

"He had one leg over, he just had to get the other leg over. When I saw him, I ran over to him and ripped him off the wall," Vergara said. "I said, 'Hey, stop! What are you doing?' I knew he wanted to commit suicide at that point so the first thing you do is make sure he doesn't kill himself."

While Vergara held him down, another probie, Raunedys Pena, 29, saw the incident unfolding from his car and pulled over.

"As soon as I got to the scene, I asked him if everything is alright, he told me he needed a little bit of assistance, so I jumped out of my car and I helped him with whatever I could help him with," Pena said.

Pena used his Spanish skills to comfort the suicidal man, who didn't speak English and appeared drunk.

"He was mumbling...He was intoxicated, you could tell from his smell. He had a strong odor.

"He told me he had a lot of problems that he didn't want to be here. I just talked him through it, trying to comfort him."

Even in the midst of this dramatic rescue, the quick-thinking duo didn't want to risk being late to class.

"I thought in my head, I don't want to be late, so I asked Pena to call the Rock and let them know, we might be a little bit late for our training today," Vergara said.

They made it on time for their 5:45 a.m. drill and proved that a fireman is never off-duty.

“Every morning you wake up and you don’t know what you’re going to encounter but you have to be ready for anything,” said Pena, a former Jet-Blue worker.

“Especially with this job, people count on us to help them, to do our job.”

Vergara echoed the sentiment: “If you see somebody that could use assistance go with that and always keep that in the back of our head.”



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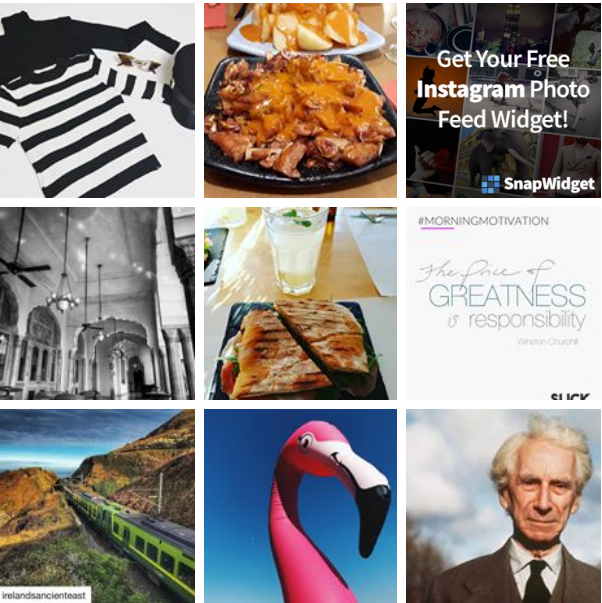
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